

/The Chinese/

N knowledge of sanitation and elementary health regulations. Their
 *563 concepts of health and disease rest mainly on the traditional beliefs.
 751 The concept that dominates most of their thinking about the human
 [792] body and its health is that of the Two Principles of yang and yin.
 S These are philosophical concepts of the origin of all things. The
 563 yang-principle represents the male and the yin represents the
 751 female. They stand for opposite poles - heaven and earth, sun
 [792] and moon, day and night, heat and cold, life and death, positive
 and negative, strong and weak.

N In medicine, everything is classified as yang or yin. The
 *563 exterior of the body - the skin - is yang, while the interior is
 753 yin. The back is yang, while the abdomen is yin. The heart and
 772 liver are yang while the spleen, lungs and kidneys are yin. A
 826 disease, accordingly, is yang when due to external causes and yin
 S when due to internal causes. Respiratory diseases, fever, and
 563 diseases affecting the upper part of the body are yang diseases.
 753 Chills and afflictions of the lower body, and circulatory diseases
 772 are yin diseases. When the yin predominates, one suffers from
 826 yang disease; when the yang is in excess yin results. These two
 S principles must be kept in mind when treating the disease, since
 [278] the drugs and herbs are also divided into these two classes.

N Another Chinese concept concerning health is that of the exis-
 *563 tence of the Five Elements - metal, wood, water, fire and earth.
 751 According to this belief, the human body is composed of a mixture
 772 of the five elements. So long as the proportions of these five
 792 elements remain in order, health results. If the balance is dis-
 563 turbed, disease follows.

S These beliefs are common mainly among the uneducated popu-
 753 lation, the rural and the lower classes of the urban population.
 772 In most cases, the higher classes have a Western knowledge of
 792 the basic elements of health and sanitation and know the basic
 [84] facts of human physiology and the causes of transmission of diseases.
 S Illiteracy and ignorance is much greater in the Northwest region
 [212] than along the Pacific Coast. Thus, in the Northwest, the beliefs
 are widespread and most Western ideas have not penetrated into
 the larger part of the population.

S Unfortunately, we do not have figures on the birth and death
 114 rate in Northwest China. The figures for all of China are given
 161 in the chapter on "Health and Sanitation" of the General China
 165 Handbook.

C. Predominant Diseases Among the Chinese

N The most common diseases are the fecal-borne ones. They are
 *563 spread through the use of human waste as fertilizer. Andre Migot,
 164 who travelled through Northwest China in 1946, dwells on this
 364 problem in his description of a typical middle-sized town in this
 S area (Tibetan Marches, p. 51): "Then there is the problem of sani-
 563 tation. The total volume of human excrement produced every day
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by half a million people - even if they live mainly on rice - is bound to be formidable. No sewage system of any kind exists; its place is taken by an old established guild of public servants who can be seen every morning in large numbers making their way through the streets. The casks or buckets which dangle from the bamboo poles across their shoulders smell no better than you would expect them to. They are always full to the brim and their contents, which are eventually sold to truck gardens on the outskirts of the city, are a constant threat to the legs of the passers-by.... The buckets in which they carry their night soil down the hill are used, after being briskly rinsed, to carry their water up."

Besides producing a very unpleasant picture, this description brings out the very serious problems connected with the lack of a proper sewage system. It also points out the many possibilities for spreading contagious diseases and infections.

Tuberculosis is quite prevalent in China. Epidemic diseases are common also, such as typhoid and paratyphoid fevers, cholera and smallpox. Malaria and the two kinds of dysenteries, amoebic and bacillary also are present. Death at childbirth, both of infants and mothers, is quite high, because of the lack of adequate sanitary precautions during childbirth and the practices of the midwives, who do nothing to prevent infection of both mother and child.

Winfield in his book states that "seventy-five per cent of all deaths in China are due to preventable diseases that are under control in the West; there are about 15 million deaths each year in China, of which 11,750,000 are due to preventable diseases." (China: The Land and the People, p. 111).

D. Medical Personnel

The lack of Western-trained doctors, nurses, pharmacists and dentists in the Northwest is an extremely serious problem. Most people, because of the shortage of medical personnel, still go to the local herb-doctors. (A full description of the traditional Chinese science of medicine is given in the General Handbook). In many less-acute cases, people either neglect to do anything or attempt to treat themselves by unscientific methods.

E. Efforts of the Government

The Nationalist Government was aware of the serious shortage of medical personnel and equipment in all of China, including the Northwest. Two national organizations were established in the 1930's to deal with these problems: The Department of Public Health under the Ministry of the Interior, which had a Northwestern Office for the Prevention of Epidemics, and the National Health Department under the National Economic Council, which also had an office in the Northwest.